

**Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, June 20, 1790,
from the Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve
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Leicester Ford.**

TO JAMES MONROE J. MSS.

New York, June 20, 1790.

Dear Sir, —An attack of a periodical headach, which tho violent for a few days only, yet kept me long in a lingering state, has hitherto prevented my sooner acknowledging the receipt of your favor of May 26. I hope the uneasiness of Mrs. Monroe & yourself has been removed by the re-establishment of your daughter. We have been in hopes of seeing her here, and fear at length some change in her arrangements for that purpose.

Congress has been long embarrassed by two of the most irritating questions that ever can be raised among them, 1. the funding the public debt, and 2. the fixing on a more central residence. After exhausting their arguments & patience on these subjects, they have for some time been resting on their oars, unable to get along as to these businesses, and indisposed to attend to anything else till they are settled. And in fine it has become probable that unless they can be reconciled by some plan of compromise, there will be no funding bill agreed to, our credit (raised by late prospects to be the first on the exchange at Amsterdam, where our paper is above par) will burst and vanish, and the states separate to take care every one of itself. This prospect appears probable to some well informed and well-disposed minds. Endeavours are therefore using to bring about a disposition to some mutual sacrifices. The assumption of state debts has appeared as revolting to several states as their non-assumption to others. It is proposed to strip the proposition of the injustice it would have done by leaving the states who have redeemed much of

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their debts on no better footing than those who have redeemed none; on the contrary it is recommended to assume a fixed sum, allotting a portion of it to every State in proportion to it's census. Consequently every one will receive exactly what they will have to pay, or they will be exonerated so far by the general government's taking their creditors off their hands. There will be no injustice then. But there will be the objection still that Congress must then lay taxes for these debts which would have been much better laid & collected by the state governments. And this is the objection on which the accommodation now hangs with the non-assumptioners, many of whom committed themselves in their advocacy of the new constitution

by arguments drawn from the improbability that Congress would ever lay taxes where the states could do it separately. These gentlemen feel the reproaches which will be levelled at them personally. I have been, & still am of their opinion that Congress should always prefer letting the States raise money in their own way where it can be done. But in the present instance I see the necessity of yielding for this time to the cries of the creditors in certain parts of the union, for the sake of union, and to save us from the greatest of all calamities, the total extinction of our credit in Europe. On the other subject it is proposed to pass an act fixing the temporary residence of 12. or 15. years at Philadelphia, and that at the end of that time it shall stand *ipso facto* & without further declaration transferred to Georgetown. In this way, there will be something to displease & something to soothe every part of the Union, but New York, which must be contented with what she has had. If this plan of compromise does not take place, I fear one infinitely worse, an unqualified assumption, & the perpetual residence on the Delaware. The Pennsylvania & Virginia delegations have conducted themselves honorably & unexceptionably on the question of residence. Without descending to talk about bargains they have seen that their true interests lay in not listening to insidious propositions made to divide & defect them, and we have seen them at times voting against their respective wishes rather than separate. * * *

I flatter myself with being in Virginia in the autumn. The particular time depends on too many contingencies to be now fixed. I shall hope the pleasure of seeing yourself & Mrs.

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Monroe either in Albemarle or wherever else our routes may cross each other. Present me affectionately to her and to my good neighbors generally, and be assured of the great & sincere esteem of, Dear Sir, Your affectionate friend & humble servt.